



Department of Health

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Commissioner

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Executive Deputy Commissioner

April 10, 2020

COVID-19 Update

Dear Resident/Representative:

On behalf of the NYS Veterans Home at Oxford and all its staff, I am writing to provide an update on the Infection Control Program and efforts to control the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

As of today, we have tested almost 20 residents, and 9 residents on the Pine Neighborhood have tested positive. All other test results were negative. We reviewed the events on Pine the week prior and have no clear link to the cause.

Since we started following government guidelines over three weeks ago, we have screened staff and turned away those with potential symptoms. It was only after these residents tested positive that several employees, who had worked with our Pine residents, have developed symptoms and are now out of work on home quarantine waiting for test results.

We have moved residents with symptoms to rooms on the left hall of Pine and are caring for them with a dedicated group of staff; most of whom have volunteered to work there. We are very fortunate to have such a caring and dedicated group of employees. All staff on Pine wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE – facemasks, gloves, gowns, and goggles). We have a supply of PPE thanks to the pre-planning efforts of staff, but we are also preparing for how we will conserve and prolong the use of these supplies.

To ensure the safest possible environment for all residents, we are holding mail for at least a day and packages for longer before we deliver them to prevent the transmission of the virus. Please check with us before sending a package so that we can advise you on how this will be handled. If you have any concerns with mail and packages, please call and speak with a Social Worker.

We continue to receive face mask donations and have begun to share them with staff and residents. Thank you!

A letter from the area Ombudsman is included so that you are aware of their response to the nationwide COVID-19 outbreak. If you have any questions, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Kurt D. Apthorpe, MBA, CHNA, LNHA
NYS Veterans Home
4207 State Highway 220
Oxford, NY 13830



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Claudette Royal
State Ombudsman
1-855-582-6769

Dear Residents and Resident Representatives,

As you know by now, long-term care facilities nationwide must restrict visitors and non-essential health care personnel per federal and state guidance. In response to this directive, all New York State (NYS) Certified Long Term Care Ombudsmen will refrain from entering long-term care facilities and will provide “virtual” visiting by phone, email and other web-based technologies. This is a temporary, but necessary, change to protect the health and safety of residents. As the State Ombudsman, I am in regular contact with Federal and State authorities and we are consistently monitoring the status of the COVID-19 outbreak. We will return to normal visitation once it has been deemed safe to do so.

During this time, facilities, residents, and resident representatives who would otherwise visit in-person, need to use alternative means of communication such as phone, Facetime, Skype, email, etc. One of the chief concerns resident representatives have is their anxiety of not knowing how their loved one is being cared for during this time. To proactively address this, facilities should provide alternative means of communication to ensure residents and their representatives are staying informed and maintaining regular contact.

Please be assured that the NYS Ombudsman Program will continue to respond to, and investigate complaints brought forth by residents, family members, or other individuals acting on the resident’s behalf. Ombudsmen will be facilitating communication by phone or video conferencing and concerns will be addressed. The rights, safety, and well-being of residents is our priority. We will continue to represent resident’s best interests and work to ensure quality care remains a primary focus during this difficult time.

If you have concerns related to a long-term care facility, contact your local Long Term Care Ombudsman office at (607-722-1251) or via email at (rmack@actionforolderpersons.org).

Sincerely,

Claudette Royal
New York State Long Term Care Ombudsman

The Office of the State Long-Term Care Ombudsman is a programmatically independent advocacy service located within the New York State Office for the Aging. Points of view, opinions or positions of the Ombudsman Program do not necessarily represent the views, positions or policy of the New York State Office for the Aging.